

MEMORANDUM

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TO: W. A. Stewart

DATE 5/18/69

FROM: K. Kellen

MEMO NO. 6413

SUBJECT: JERRY HICKEY'S ACCOMMODATION AND COALITION IN VIETNAM

COPIES TO: C. Cooper, D. Ellsberg, F. Ikle, R. Komer, G. Pauker

So overwhelming is Jerry Hickey's command of recent political events in Vietnam, and so clear some of his presentation of the intricate strands of political, ethnic, religious and other activities, that I am fearful of appearing presumptuous by stating that I find myself in disagreement with his fundamental thesis. Jerry shows how the endless number of groups and sub-groups over the past decade have kept gyrating toward and away from each other, splitting at one moment, coalescing the next, changing shape, size, program and leadership in the process. Yesterday's enemies are today's friends and vice versa, and just as there is dissension, division and friction everywhere, accommodation and cooperation between strange and not-so-strange bedfellows pervades the entire political-religious-racial landscape that is forever in flux. Jerry does an outstanding job in presenting it all to the reader, and that part of his effort is very valuable.

But Jerry concludes that the accommodation he perceives can grow and include ever more groups until peace is established and some form of working system insured. He thinks that there are really three forms of accommodations needed and possible: (1) Among the various groups in the South; (2) Between these groups and the Thieu government; (3) Between these groups plus the Thieu government and the NLF. The quid pro quo with which these disparate groups must accommodate are "concessions" in the form of "real power," but Jerry never spells out just what kind of concessions that would be. Yet, this is the crux of the matter, I think, and I suspect that Jerry failed to spell them out not because of an oversight, but because none suggest themselves, at least not for (2) and (3) above, though one can visualize that accommodation under (1) could make headway -- and then stop there.

Jerry says, for example: "In arriving at a solution to the war that will be satisfactory to both sides, the National Liberation Front . . . will have to be given a significant role in the postwar political structure." It seems to me that type of thinking was -- after considerable prevalence -- recognized as unrealistic as early as two years ago. It is really predicated upon an assumption of victory of our side, essentially, after which we "give" the other side a "significant" role. "It appears," Jerry continues, "that this will be done through elections, and the NLF will be a formidable contender." But everybody knows that no such elections can be real, and that all that matters is who is in control and where. Where we are in control, the NLF is not a formidable contender; where they are in control they win. And nation-wide elections are unthinkable without an armistice (which cannot be obtained), or international supervision which is not acceptable to them (as we visualize it), or a free press and many other democratic institutions that would have to precede, accompany and follow an election to make it really free. These conditions cannot be obtained except by victory, in which case the NLF would neither be a "formidable contender" nor would it have to be "given" a significant role. While no one can say whether the egg or the chicken came first, one can say that peace must come first, and peace cannot come through elections or the offering of a role to the NLF.

Jerry continues: "At the same time, the United States and its allies will insist on some kind of guarantee that a political balance be maintained." What kind of a guarantee would produce so miraculous a result? "This will involve discussions of such things as changes in the present constitution, the format for holding elections, and international control schemes." How can "discussions" on such subjects lead to agreements that in turn will "guarantee [the] political balance"? Jerry goes on: "In the elections and in maintaining political balance, much depends on popular support . . . Considerable popular support can be gained through the major sociopolitical groups." By this Jerry means, apparently, that the sects, the Catholics, etc., once they amalgamate and in turn accommodate with the GVN, can furnish votes for the GVN that will make it able to defeat the NLF. Why should they? Besides, the

without change
- the GVN

free press?

(there since 1965?)

main issue in Vietnam is not land reform, austerity, or any of these things, but war or peace, and there the GVN is really caught in one of those contradictions the other side clearly perceives: if the GVN is truly hawkish, it cannot win a popular majority; if it is dovish it cannot win the war.

In general, the fact that there is a great deal of local and inter-personal accommodation in Vietnam and that even, as Jerry points out, "during the past 15 years there has been a pattern of inter-group accommodation to form political coalitions in times of relative uncertainty," simply does not mean that such proclivities on the part of some Vietnamese individuals or organizations can lead to the over-all accommodation Hickey envisages. In fact, Hickey himself points out that in the North, the advent of the Ho regime spelled the end of accommodation there, and in the South, too, the Front gives every indication that it neither seeks, nor expects to tolerate, any such fusions, nor, in fact does the other side. The GVN, whatever else it may be, is certainly not "soft on Communism," and the communists certainly are not "soft on GVN-ism." On this score probability surely rests more with Henry Kissinger who in his Foreign Affairs article (September 1968) said: "It is beyond the imagination that parties that have been murdering and betraying each other for twenty-five years could work together as a team giving joint instructions to the entire country." It goes even further than that: it is not only because they have done to each other what they did that they can never have a coalition, but also because they simply have irreconcilable differences on every important issue as to what should be done, and who should do it.

Finally, to come back to the accommodation envisaged by Jerry between the sociopolitical groups, he says that because they are mainly run by civilians while the GVN is mainly run by the military, "concessions of power" will have to be made to such groups "in order to gain their support." What concessions? The GVN ever without support has barely enough power itself to keep from falling; just what concessions can it make to anybody?

(3) There is a
third element

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But that is only a side issue. Jerry's main point, discussed above, that overall accommodation can emerge in Vietnam is a result of concessions all around, plus free elections, balance of power, international supervision, guarantees and so on strikes me not only as unrealistic, but as a pernicious thesis, ^{acc. others} by which many of us have led ourselves and others by the nose long enough now, and which is perhaps as unoriginal as it is unrealistic.

NO

Thus the question arises how Rand's interest could best be served here? The piece as is should not be an RM for the aforementioned reasons. If the (rather arbitrarily superimposed) political conclusions were eliminated, there would, of course, be a body of very interesting recent history of these sociopolitical groups left. But there Jerry now runs into the competition of a new and quite respectable body of publications on the subject. Still, what he has to say, being largely the result of his own personal investigations, merits to see the light of day in the form of a P, as he suggests.

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